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NRO REVIEW COMPLETED

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NRP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting Held April 29, 1968
Office of Deputy Secretary of Defense
Room 3E 928, The Pentagon
3:30 p.m. - 4:50 p.m.

Members Present

Mr. Paul H. Nitze	Deputy Secretary of Defense
Mr. Richard Helms	Director of Central Intelligence
Dr. Donald F. Hornig	Special Assistant to the President for Science and Technology

Others Present

Dr. Alexander H. Flax	Director, National Reconnaissance Office, Ex Officio
Mr. James Q. Reber	Secretary, NRP Executive Committee Ex Officio

Dr. John S. Foster, Jr.	DDR&E
Vice Adm. Rufus Taylor	DDCI
Mr. Carl E. Duckett	CIA
Mr. John A. Bross	Deputy to the DCI
Dr. Donald Steininger	PSAC Staff
Mr. Fred S. Hoffman	Assistant Director, BOB
Mr. C. William Fischer	BOB
[Redacted]	NRO Comptroller
Col. Frank W. Hartley, Jr.	Director, NRO Program D
[Redacted]	NRO Program D
Col. Bernard L. Bailey	NRO Program D
Col. Paul E. Worthman	NRO Staff

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This meeting of the NRP Executive Committee was called specifically to review the situation and developments since the deployment of the SR-71 to Kadena where

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the OXCART has been on standby pending its planned return to the United States and phaseout by June 30, 1968, and to consider issues which might affect that planned phaseout.

Operational Briefing on SR-71

Dr. Flax requested Colonel Hartley, Director of NRO Program D, to brief the Executive Committee on the deployment and operational status of the SR-71.

Colonel Hartley reported on the SR-71 overseas deployment which was concluded without incident. The total complement of personnel deployed is approximately 400. To date there have been six operational missions flown, totaling about 29 hours. Of these missions there were three aborts, one ground and two air. The former was caused by malfunction of the Astroinertial Navigation System (ANS) and the latter aborts were because of generator difficulties. The ground abort was flown one hour later and Mission S 010 which was an air abort had already completed approximately one half of its mission. To date there has been no requirement to use the OXCART backup.

Of the six missions flown, the film has been received in the National Photographic Interpretation Center (NPIC) and a technical evaluation made on four. Two missions, S 010 and S 011, were made on April 28 and 29 but the product had not yet been received in Washington.

Colonel Hartley pointed out that the Aircraft in Commission rate was 76.9 percent which slightly exceeds the anticipated rate. He also indicated that the rate in Non-Operational Ready Supply (NORS) of 1.1 percent is better than the average NORS rate for the F-4, Century Series, and B-66 aircraft in Southeast Asia.

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In conclusion Colonel Hartley reported that the Deputy Director for Reconnaissance, JCS, has stated that, weather permitting, it appears that the SR-71 can satisfy and be responsive to the national objectives.

Consideration of OXCART

The discussion of the Executive Committee centered upon the options which had been outlined with costs in the memorandum which the DNRO had prepared for the Deputy Secretary of Defense on March 7 [] 12721-68) and which had subsequently been distributed to the ExCom as an attachment to [] 12948-68.

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The following summarizes the substance of the Executive Committee's discussion:

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b. The wider camera swath width of the OXCART does provide a capability for coverage of SAM protected targets from outside the SAM

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range as indicated by an exhibit presented by Mr. Duckett. The SR-71, because of its narrower swath width, would, if it covered the same targets, expose itself more to SAM attack. Dr. Flax and Dr. Foster pointed out that this mode of operation could only be used if the locations of occupied SAM sites were known and if the other side did not react by relocating the SAMs to counter the tactic. Except for this point, however, the SR-71 could, by flying more missions at some small cost, obtain the target coverage required. A redesign of the SR-71 camera to obtain a wider swath width would be a matter of a year and a half in time.

c. Option 4, which is the continuation of current OXCART operations [REDACTED] and which the DCI preferred, would cost about [REDACTED] for FY 1969 than Option 1 which provides for the transfer of OXCART to SAC at Beale AFB.

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d. Option 4 would cost about [REDACTED] more than Option 2 which provided for the transfer of the OXCART to SAC and reduction of eight in the SAC SR-71 inventory.

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e. Option 3, which provided for the OXCART's remaining under CIA management but located at Beale AFB and which would cost approximately the same as Option 4, was unacceptable to Mr. Helms from a security point of view.

f. Dr. Flax stated that under any "extension" option FY 1969 costs could be reduced by such policies as limiting the number of aircraft flying, reducing R&D and improvement programs, or reducing flying hours and that if an extension were determined then careful consideration should be given to logistical approaches for lower costs.

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g. It was recognized that the TAGBOARD had not yet reached operational status and could not at present be considered a practicable alternative to the OXCART to accomplish covert missions. Furthermore, depending on the number of missions required to accomplish a given assignment, it could be considerably more expensive.

h. In response to a query from Mr. Nitze as to whether satellite reconnaissance could not be a substitute for aircraft reconnaissance, Dr. Flax mentioned a study he had made of South China in which,

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he emphasized that the lack of responsiveness of satellite photography makes it an unlikely prospect to accomplish the kind of tasks which the OXCART and SR-71 could accomplish with particular regard to quick reaction, frequency of coverage, and responsiveness to weather opportunities.

Mr. Helms stated that after giving the matter a great deal of thought he felt that the question of the OXCART really hinged on whether it makes a difference to the President if indeed a reconnaissance aircraft comes down in hostile territory. The aircraft is so advanced that it can only have come from one country in the world. If the pilot is civilian and if the plane is unmarked, then that hostile country is not forced to make an issue of the incident.

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Dr. Hornig noted that there are missions other than in the Far East which the OXCART could serve.

The Deputy Secretary of Defense indicated that he did not believe that the civilian pilot argument was compelling,

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feeling instead the central issue was a budgetary one. His concern was whether what we buy with the additional [redacted] required by Option 4 is worth it; and if it is, he queried where the money for an option would come from. In response to a question from Mr. Nitze, Mr. Helms indicated that he could not reprogram CIA funds to meet the [redacted] additional required for Option 4 for 1969. In regard to the NRO, Dr. Flax indicated that the funds [redacted] could be taken from [redacted] but he believed that this program should not be slipped and called attention to some views that the pace of this program was unsatisfactorily slow. If the money were taken from the [redacted] Dr. Flax indicated that the impact would be severe. Mr. Hoffman of the Bureau of the Budget said that if there were an effort to change the present decision to phase out the OXCART the Director of the BOB wished to present his case to higher authority.

At this point, Secretary Nitze indicated that he would like to discuss the matter further with Mr. Helms and Dr. Hornig in executive session. All participants except the three Executive Committee members adjourned.

[redacted]
James Q. Reber
Secretary

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